

Testimony for House Bill # 5577

AN ACT REQUIRING THE EVALUATION OF THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF ESTABLISHING CERTAIN COMMERCIAL GAMING WITHIN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

March 10, 2016

Submitted by: Joanie Masot, Southington, CT

Senator Hartley, Representative Perone and respective members of the Commerce Committee.

My name is Joanie Masot and I am a resident of Southington, CT. I am an employee of Advocacy Unlimited, Inc. which is a statewide, peer run, organization that is dedicated to improving the wellbeing and overall outcomes for individuals who experience mental health and co-occurring disorders. (www.mindlink.org) My capacity at Advocacy Unlimited, Inc. is the Coordinator of Problem Gambling. I am also a person in recovery for 13 years from problem gambling.

I am submitting testimony today to voice my concerns about House Bill # 5577. I am opposed to this bill as it is written.

I would not be opposed to the study if it included other critical research such as the social and public health costs and was to be completed by an independent source.

The bill as it is written is only for the reason of evaluating the costs and benefits to our state with authorizing expansion of commercial gaming facilities. The bill does not mention or require any part of it to evaluate the social outlook such as how it will increase the problem gambling addiction in our state.

Problem gambling has been emerging as a significant public health issue in our state. Prevailing public health initiatives addressing problem gambling are only beginning to be examined. Little effort has been made to respond to this important risk of our Connecticut residents. The state of Connecticut has not done a problem gambling study since Governor Jodi Rell was in office. The study is very costly and we don't see that study being approved anytime in the near future with the crisis of our state's budget.

That being said I, have to ask why the state would allow such a study to be completed when it is only for the reasons stated in the bill. We already know the outcome of the study and it would be in favor of our state to allow more commercial gaming expansion. The study is guaranteed to show the most favorable locations in our state to add a new gaming expansion and to maximize the states revenues.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my concerns on this raised bill and thank you for listening. Please re-consider the real reasons this study is being completed.

jmasot@advocacyunlimited.org